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ABSTRACT

This program describes an experimental series of six training workshops, directed toward the unique needs of counselors in inner-city schools. The workshops attempted to counteract insularity in current counselor education programs (textbooks and tape recorded interviews) by providing new and more potent methods for counseling disadvantaged students. The training sessions used videotaped stimulus vignettes, small group interaction exercises, and Interpersonal Process Recall demonstrations and recall sessions. The trainees were 12 masters degree candidates in Counselor Education at New York University; simultaneously, they were employed as counselors and teachers in "inner city" schools in New York City. The stimulus materials were videotaped by the workshop leader, and situations used in training were directly relevant to the trainees' ongoing needs and experiences in their work settings. Workshop sessions consisted of small group participation in structural exercises, which were videotaped, and large group discussions. Trainees viewed 12 threatening and immediate stimulus vignettes during which they were videotaped; small group interactions and total group discussions were also videotaped and played back, and IPR was used as a continuing vehicle for counselor supervision throughout the workshop series. Results of the workshop were rated as positive by the trainees. (Author)

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PREPARING COUNSELORS FOR DISADVANTAGED STUDENTS USING VIDEOTAPE & IPR

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Despite long overdue emphasis on urban education, and recent statewide and national concerns with increased "field based experience" in working with "disadvantaged" in programs of counselor education, few beginning counselors have any idea of what they will face when they leave the womb of the university, and the security of textbooks and obsolete tape recorded interviews.

Many talented and dedicated young practitioners are not only "turned off" but traumatized by the realities confronting them in actual counseling situations. These students have been led to believe they are "pro-activists" and " the counselors of 'tomorrow.'" Upon completion of traditional training, they return to universities with statements of disappointment, such as "you have let us down," or, "sold us a bill of goods." Then, overwhelmed by frustration, and imbued with an irreparable sense of failure themselves, these potential contributors to the disadvantaged leave not only those counseling and teaching situations in which they are so sorely needed, but the educational profession itself. (Aubrey 1972; Kehas 1972)

Ironically, disenchantment and attrition coexist with Boards of Education "task force" reports recommending positive thrusts for guidance, educational reform and innovation, and institutional change. These reports, replete with guidelines for implementation, have as yet, with a few recent and highly controversial "pioneer" exceptions (Aubrey 1972; 1973; Carroll, Aubrey et al 1972; Carroll 1973; Sprinthall, 1973), constituted paper puppets. Traditional counselor training is either not reaching students who work with disadvantaged youngsters, or, not preparing them adequately for their very real task.

In an attempt to counteract insularity in training, and try out new and possibly

more potent dimensions of counselor education, this experimental program was conducted.

The project consisted of a series of six training workshops, using videotape and IPR, directed toward the unique needs of counselors in inner city schools.

The trainnees were 12 Masters degree candidates in counselor education at New York University; simultaneously, they were employed as counselors and teachers in "inner city" schools in New York City. The workshops were voluntary, sessions were held on weekends, and training consisted of a total of 18 hours spaced over a six-week period. The training sessions used videotaped stimulus vignettes, small group interaction exercises, and IPR demonstrations and recall sessions.

OBJECTIVES

The overall goal of the workshop series was enrichment of the counselor training experience of graduate students placed in urban settings for practicum (or already working in such settings) along specific dimensions which were important to them in counseling disadvantaged students.

Explicit objectives were:

1. Active and in-depth participation in the counseling process, both in an individual and group level.
2. Intensive exposure to and practice in working with the kinds of potentially threatening situations that the trainees faced every day, and that they were expected to handle competently.
3. Direct focus on specific interpersonal concerns which create communication barriers between counselor (or teacher) and client (or student).

These objectives were viewed as particularly important to practitioners working with disadvantaged students in inner city schools. The trainees had voiced a desperate need for "realistic" experience, according to their needs, and the training sessions were geared accordingly.

WORKSHOP DESCRIPTION:

STIMULUS MATERIALS AND RATIONALE

The stimulus materials were videotaped by the workshop leader, and situations used in training were directly relevant to the trainees' ongoing needs and experiences in their work settings. Sample vignettes were the following:

White adolescent male (with beard): My first counseling practicum was quite an experience. You see, they wanted us to tell them what we thought about some things, and so we did. After all, these guys are supposed to want us to be honest and really tell our feelings...so I did. You know what happened? They got pissed off."

Black adolescent male: "What's wrong? Do I bug ya'? Yeh.. I bug ya. I'm going to keep on bugging ya' too. I'm just going to sit on back and keep buggin' ya', and buggin' ya', and buggin' ya. I'm just going to bug ya..."

Black adolescent male: (Non verbal) Head on table. Looks up. "I don't have a pencil." Pencil is handed to him. He pauses, then breaks pencil.

White Italian adolescent male (with hat): "I used to think that when I got here, I'd have it made. -- Just to get here. --and then I got here." (Removes hat)

White adolescent female: "Some stud ... ya' think you're so great don't ya.' You're nothing ... I mean nothing."

Black adolescent male: You are so neat ... Yeah, that's just the way I feel. You know, in this day and age, there just aren't many people like you. At least I'm glad I found one of them. I'd like to -- you know -- just forget about everybody else and stay here with you..."

These materials and a very few others pertained specifically to the needs and exigencies of the counselors and teachers, and practicum students, in the New York School system.

Additionally, they addressed in immediate and concrete terms, four potential (and almost universal) interpersonal blocks to communication:

1. If you drop your guard, the other person will hurt you.
2. If you let yourself go or "get in touch with 'your own feelings and impulses'," you may hurt the other person.
3. The general area of sexuality, seductiveness, dependency, and affectionate "stickiness"
4. Vague 'gut level' anxiety over one's own dependent, intimate, sexual needs. (Kagan 1972)

The stimulus vignettes selected for this workshop portrayed immediately uncensored affective versions of the above four areas, thus approximating the kind of "shock treatment" and overt confrontations that the trainees were experiencing in their work and practicum settings. Additionally, untutored non professional "actors" and "actresses," (undergraduate and graduate students at NYU) improvising and spontaneously "delivering" provocative affective material did away with the potentially unrealistic aspects of simulation.

PROCEDURES

The workshop sessions consisted of stimulus viewing, small group participation in structured exercises, simultaneous videotaping of these trainee interactions, and large group discussions. After initially viewing (and reacting to) 12 threatening and immediate stimulus vignettes, during which the trainees were videotaped, small group interactions and total group discussions were also videotaped, played back, and IPR was used as a continuing vehicle for counselor supervision throughout the workshop series. Group discussion leadership consisted of "Inquiry" (Kagan 1972;1973) and use of "Inquirer Leads" (Werner & Harris, 1972).

For example, the trainees were instructed to imagine that they were alone with the person on the screen. After viewing the situation, reactions to the stimulus material were the focus for two and three person group interaction exercises such as the following:

"Person A is to respond to the stimulus only, and verbalize reactions to person B. B is to respond to A. Person C is to respond to the interaction between A and B, and act as a "reality check" on their communication, e. g., did he/she hear you right? Each person will see the stimulus and react differently. Try not to let these perceptions interfere with open honest communication."

These and other similar small group interactions were videotaped, and then replayed for discussion by the group as a whole.

Group discussions focussed initially upon stimulus material and areas of affective concern. During later workshop sessions, as the trainees gained confidence and sophistication, discussions centered more around recall of trainee interactions, self supervision, and use of inquiry technique. Sample "inquiries" used throughout the workshops, by group leader (and eventually, the trainees) during interactions and video recall sessions were:

What did you feel? What were your body reactions?

When else in your life did you feel that way?

What did that do to you?

What did you think? What would you probably do?

What would you really want to do?

Any risks involved in doing that? What was your fantasy of what might happen if you did/said that?

What did you think the person was feeling about you?

What made him/her think he could talk to you that way - that is, what did he/she see in you or think he/she saw in you which gave him/her the right? What did you think he or she really wanted you to do or really wanted to make you feel?

If you've never before experienced that kind of interaction, have you ever felt that someone wanted to tell you what the person you were viewing did? What does that usually do? (Kagan, 1972)

RESULTS

At the end of the series, (and during later workshop sessions) the trainee's expressed feelings about the following:

1. Finding things out about themselves that they "didn't want to know ... or else I really did, but didn't have the guts ..."
2. Changing their jobs.
3. Changing their life situations.
4. Being better able to understand not only themselves and their "clients," but possessing a deeper sense of commitment to themselves and their clients.

Ironically, during the workshops, several trainees also noticed that as they were rated as "better counselors" by practicum supervisors and counselor education textbook criteria, it became increasingly difficult for them to participate in and facilitate honest, empathic, accepting human interaction. Traditional counselor education seemed to conflict with the simplicity of being another person's "interested sincere student," being patient, not interpreting, and generally permitting and encouraging the other's self discovery and learning.

Despite potential interference (and negative effects) of "ivory tower" counselor education, the overall results of the workshop series were rated as positive by the trainees. After the 18 hour training series, the trainees reported having more confidence in themselves as competent and <u>flexible</u> practitioners. One example can illustrate the kind of interpersonal honesty and willingness to take risks which were integral parts of such increased flexibility.

C: "I finally dropped 'the "role" of the counselor' with (client) today. I got mad again, but this time I told (client) I thought I was being conned around the block, and how that made me feel, and what I usually did when I felt like that,

and how I wasn't going to do that anymore. You know what happened? (Client) opened up and really talked to me -- it was a real break through. Now we've got something going instead of that game we've been playing for two months."

More significantly, upon degree completion and continued work experience with disadvantaged students, the trainees did not join the ranks of their "disenchanted" colleagues and fellow graduates. They neither withdrew nor "dropped out" from the realities of practice, but manifested enthusiasm about continued work with disadvantaged, and eagerness to meet the challenges of the inner city; in schools and in other urban settings. Follow up interviews six months after the training sessions regarding job continuance, selection, and placement has confirmed the trainees' self reports.

CONCLUSION

Since the training sessions arose from student request and were designed to meet their unique needs, experimental rigor was not a consideration in this project; either in filming the stimulus vignettes, or in terms of pre-post measures of counselor effectiveness. Furthermore, experiments with IPR in comparison to other methods of training and supervision have yielded inconclusive results (Kagan ,Krathwohl, et al 1967: Kagan 1973), so evaluation of the technique per se on the basis of this project would not be feasible. Rather the IPR training was an added dimension, geared to certain realistic counseling situations that were not being considered by traditional existing modes of counselor education.

The encouraging trainee self reports and follow up results may be viewed, as a directional hint, in terms of enrichment and expansion of current counselor education methodology. Particularly when working with disadvantaged students, practitioners often have to deviate radically from traditional frames of reference

in order to establish productive, meaningful interpersonal relationships. The non-protective, non-insular aspects of the IPR training mode, based upon their reality, may have provided the trainees on an experiential level with the interpersonal freedom and courage necessary for effective work in inner city counseling situations.

If programs of counselor education are to address and confront the issues involved in working with disadvantaged students, and effectively train practitioners instead of mass-producing disgruntled, naive and ill-equipped "pro-activists, "some change in traditional modus operandi is necessary. Demands for accountability, credibility, changing state certification requirements for counselors and other school personnel, and already existant educational and societal pressures add an immediate impetus to the necessity for breaking out of obsolescence. Counselors and counselor educators alike are still searching (and sometimes floundering) for a viable professional identity. In this instance such an identity must be workable and make sense in the harsh realities of the inner city. (Shertzer & Stone 1963). This experiment suggests that flexibility and willingness to try out and adopt new dimensions in counselor education must come from within the "ivory tower" and training institutions before it is too late, and future practitioners leave the profession while their disadvantaged clients go elsewhere for meaninful counseling services.

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